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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 001656

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SUBJECT: FRENCH MFA OFFICIAL DISCUSSES COTE D'IVOIRE, TOGO,  
C.A.R., JUDICIAL INVESTIGATIONS

REF: A. ABIDJAN 246

[1](#)B. 05 PARIS 952

[1](#)C. 05 PARIS 1229

[1](#)D. PARIS 1118

[1](#)E. PARIS 553

Classified By: Political-Minister Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt, reasons  
1.4 (b/d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: In a March 13 meeting devoted to Liberia (septel), MFA DAS-equivalent for West Africa Bruno Foucher offered brief comments on Cote d'Ivoire (February clash between French and Ivoirian forces in western Cote d'Ivoire was deliberately instigated by the Ivoirian side), Togo (Faure is accepted as Togo's leader but needs to escape the influence of his father's entourage; Gilchrist Olympio is impeding reconciliation talks), and C.A.R. (no functioning economy). Foucher said that the MFA was not involved substantively in judicial investigations involving Cote d'Ivoire and Togo. END SUMMARY.

COTE D'IVOIRE

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[1](#)2. (C) After providing a readout on March 13 on Liberian President Johnson-Sirleaf's March 7-10 visit to Paris (septel), MFA DAS-equivalent for West Africa Bruno Foucher, visibly irritated, commented on the clash between French and Ivoirian forces in western Cote d'Ivoire during the February 26-28 period (ref A). He said there was no doubt on the French side that the Armed Forces of Cote d'Ivoire (FANCI) had improperly entered into the Confidence Zone in the vicinity of Bouenue and that FANCI units had sought to provoke French forces. Foucher commented that Gbagbo took every opportunity to attract attention away from PM Banny in order to "stay in the picture," and he cited the Bouenue incident as an example. Foucher said that the presence of the media to witness and record the confrontation was evidence that the incident was deliberate and had been planned in advance. Defense Minister Alliot-Marie's letter to UN Secretary-General Annan complaining about the incident was completely justified in France's view, he said. Foucher considered ongoing discussions on having UN forces return to western Cote d'Ivoire, from which they had withdrawn on January 15, as a positive step. However, he said that French distrust of Gbagbo could only grow as a result of this latest clash.

TOGO

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[1](#)3. (C) Foucher commented that Faure had consolidated his power and was accepted as Togo's leader. However, Foucher said that Faure continued to be unduly influenced by his father's entourage. Foucher mentioned specifically French citizen Charles Debbasch, a longtime Eyadema advisor who has

become Faure's advisor. Expressing scorn for Debbasch, Foucher said that the French have informed him that if he tried to use his Togolese diplomatic passport to return to France, he would be subject to arrest, based on his conviction in a fraud case in France (refs B and C). (NOTE: Togo's ex-Interior Minister Francois Boko has told us that Debbasch traveled to France during the December 2005 holiday season without any problems -- ref D. END NOTE.) Foucher remarked that another troublesome French member of Faure's inner circle was Robert Montoya, under investigation for Belarus/Togo/Cote d'Ivoire arms trafficking and his involvement in the November 6, 2004, bombing in Cote d'Ivoire that resulted in the death of nine French military and an Amcit civilian (refs D and E).

14. (C) Foucher said that Togo's other main problem was Gilchrist Olympio, the Paris-based head of the UFC opposition movement and son of the president whom Eyadema deposed in 1963. Foucher said that Togo had made substantial progress in meeting 22 of the 23 conditions that might permit a restoration of relations with the EU, including renewed economic assistance. However, there has been little progress regarding the 23rd condition concerning a national reconciliation dialogue. Foucher laid most of the blame on Gilchrist Olympio, who refused to engage in the dialogue and who used his position as ostensible "leader" of the opposition to block progress. Olympio, Foucher said, enjoyed credibility with the EU and many of its members, which made it difficult to work around him. Echoing what Boko has told us, Foucher said that Olympio seemed mired in the past, had not changed with the times, and might no longer be the best person to serve as opposition leader. Foucher said that Faure was ready to engage in dialogue but received no cooperation from Olympio. Olympio recently failed to meet with Faure in Rome, which could have been an opportunity to

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engage in positive dialogue, Foucher observed.

15. (C) In passing, Foucher noted with gloom Faure's recent eight-day visit to China, commenting that if Togo's prospects with the EU dimmed, Togo might seek a range of assistance from the PRC, which would likely not add conditions requiring democracy, human rights, and environmental reforms when providing aid. Foucher said that a lack of progress in meeting all of the EU's 23 conditions by July 22 could mean that a substantial part of the EU-Togo dialogue would have to be redone. He hoped this would not happen, referring again to Olympio's need to cooperate.

#### JUDICIAL INVESTIGATIONS

16. (C) Asked how various French judicial investigations involving Cote d'Ivoire and Togo (ref E) were affecting relations with those countries, Foucher stated firmly that, because of the French system and the independence enjoyed by the French judiciary, the MFA was not involved in the substance of the investigations at all. On occasion, the MFA might help investigators with logistics or provide information about the overall situation in a particular country but it did not and could not get involved in the investigations themselves. Foucher indicated that Cote d'Ivoire and Togo, as former French colonies, knew how the system operated and tried to work with the GOF without letting the investigations impede other aspects of relations.

#### C.A.R.

17. (C) Foucher said that C.A.R. was fortunate in that it did not have its own homegrown ethnic problem and the violence arising therefrom, although its proximity to Sudan and Chad certainly placed it at high risk of suffering from its neighbors' problems. Elections in C.A.R. had been "good." Prospects existed for renewed foreign assistance from a number of sources (EU, World Bank, African Development Bank). The problem was that C.A.R. did not, in Foucher's

view, have a functioning economy. He noted a recent visit to Paris by C.A.R.'s Finance Minister, who seemed virtually powerless and penniless. Foucher noted that many of C.A.R.'s sources of revenue -- agriculture, forestry, livestock, minerals -- however meager, were not within the Finance Minister's purview and were formally the responsibility of other government agencies. This made it very difficult, if not impossible, for the Finance Minister to be effective, Foucher lamented. He indicated that the French were trying to advise C.A.R. on how to improve management of its resources and economy but that this project would require a great deal of time and energy before results, if any, could be realized.

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